IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows. The claims are in the format as required by 35 C.F.R. § 1.121.

1-29 Cancelled

30. (New) A method comprising:

providing a primary electronic component having a first identifier stored therein, wherein the first identifier includes branding information corresponding to the primary electronic component;

providing a secondary electronic component having a second identifier stored therein, wherein the second identifier includes branding information corresponding to the secondary electronic component;

coupling the secondary component to the primary component;

comparing the first identifier to the second identifier;

operating the primary component in conjunction with the secondary component if the first identifier is compatible with the second identifier; and

operating the primary component without the secondary component if the first identifier is not compatible with the second identifier.

31. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein the secondary component continues operating if the first identifier is not compatible with the second identifier.

32. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein compatible is matching or identical.

33. (New) The method of claim 30, further comprising storing the first identifier in a memory in the primary component and storing the second identifier in a memory in the secondary component.

34. (New) The method of claim 33, wherein the first and second identifiers are stored in non-volatile memories.

35. (New) The method of claim 34, wherein the non-volatile memory in the second component is used solely for storing the second identifier.

36. (New) The method of claim 35, wherein the non-volatile memories are EEPROMs.

37. (New) The method of claim 35, wherein coupling the secondary component to the primary component comprises coupling the secondary component to the primary component via a first interconnect which is configured to transfer data between the secondary component and the primary component during normal operation and via a second interconnect which is configured to transfer data between the non-volatile memory and the primary component for the purposes of comparing the first identifier to the second identifier.

38. (New) The method of claim 37, wherein the first interconnect is a PCI bus.

39. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein the second interconnect is an Inter-IC (I^2C) bus.

40. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein the first identifier and the second identifier are OEM identities.

41. (New) The method of claim 40, wherein comparing the first identifier to the second identifier is performed during boot-up.

42. (New) A system comprising:

a primary component having a first memory, wherein the first memory has a first identifier stored therein and the first identifier includes branding information corresponding to the primary component; and

a secondary component having a second memory, wherein the second memory has a second identifier stored therein and the second identifier includes branding information corresponding to the secondary component;

wherein the secondary component is configured to be coupled to the primary component;

wherein the primary component is configured to compare the first identifier to the second identifier;

wherein the primary component is configured to enable operation in conjunction with the secondary component if the first identifier is compatible with the second identifier and operate without the secondary component if the first identifier is not compatible with the second identifier.

43. (New) The system of claim 42, wherein the secondary component is configured to continue operating if the first identifier is not compatible with the second identifier.

44. (New) The system of claim 43, wherein compatible is matching or identical.

45. (New) The system of claim 42, wherein the first and second memories are non-volatile memories.

46. (New) The system of claim 45, wherein the non-volatile memory in the second component is used solely for storing the second identifier.

47. (New) The system of claim 46, wherein the non-volatile memories are EEPROMs.

48. (New) The system of claim 46, wherein coupling the secondary component is coupled to the primary component via a first interconnect which is configured to transfer data between the secondary component and the primary component during normal operation and via a second interconnect which is configured to transfer data between the non-volatile memory and the primary component for the purposes of comparing the first identifier to the second identifier.

49. (New) The system of claim 48, wherein the first interconnect is a PCI bus.

50. (New) The system of claim 49, wherein the second interconnect is an Inter-IC (I^2C) bus.

51. (New) The system of claim 50, wherein the first identifier and the second identifier are OEM identities.

52. (New) The system of claim 51, wherein comparing the first identifier to the second identifier is performed during boot-up.

53. (New) An electrical component configured to have a secondary component coupled thereto, wherein the electrical component comprises:

a functional portion;

an interface configured to couple the functional portion to a secondary component;

a memory configured to store a first identifier, wherein the first identifier includes branding information corresponding to the electrical component; and

a comparator configured to receive a second identifier, including branding information corresponding to the second component, from the secondary component and to compare the first identifier to the second identifier, wherein the comparator is configured to enable operation in conjunction with the secondary component if the first identifier is compatible with the second identifier and operate without the secondary component if the first identifier is not compatible with the second identifier.

54. (New) The electrical component of claim 53, wherein the memory comprises a non-volatile memory.

55. (New) The electrical component of claim 54, wherein the functional portion does not utilize the memory.

56. (New) The electrical component of claim 55, wherein the interface comprises a PCI bus.

57. (New) The electrical component of claim 56, further comprising a serial bus configured to be coupled to the secondary component, wherein the electrical component is configured to receive the second identifier via the serial bus.

58. (New) The electrical component of claim 57, wherein the serial bus comprises an Inter-IC (I^2C) bus.